

*From the "Collection"*

# Installation

---

## Address

---

THE REVEREND C. REXFORD RAYMOND

SOUTH  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH



INSTALLATION ADDRESS

OF

THE REVEREND C. REXFORD RAYMOND

READ BEFORE THE COUNCIL WHICH

INSTALLED HIM AS PASTOR OF THE

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF

BROOKLYN - NEW YORK



MARCH 24TH, 1911

## HISTORICAL STATEMENT

1851-1911

March 24th was chosen for the assembling of this Council because it was the anniversary of the Council which installed the Reverend Albert Josiah Lyman as Pastor in this Church, and also because it was the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of South Church.

The Churches and individuals invited to constitute the Council were as follows: the Churches of the New York City Association of Congregational Churches, except South Church; the First Congregational Church of Angola, N.Y.; the Central Congregational Church of Philadelphia, Pa.; Rev. W. L. Beard, N.Y. City; Rev. F. Boyd Edwards, Orange, N.J.; President Henry C. King, D.D., L.L.D., Oberlin, O.; Rev. Albert J. Lyman, D.D., Brooklyn; Rev. Chas. J. Ryder, D.D., N.Y. City; Rev. Chas. W. Shelton, D.D., N.Y. City.

After the reading of this address by the Pastor-elect and the presentation of his credentials, the Council, without question or remark, voted that the examination be suspended, and, in executive session, thereupon voted without dissent to proceed with the installation ceremonies.

*Mr. Moderator and Brethren of the Council:*

Five years ago some of you helped to install a stranger from the West as Pastor of our Flushing Church. Today I again seek installation at your hands, no longer among strangers but rejoicing in your unexampled fellowship. I seize this opportunity to say to the Churches of this Council that the chivalrous and fraternal fellowship of the Ministers of this Association has enriched my life beyond measure. When sorrow comes to any of us and sympathy is needed amid the waters of affliction, the meaning of this brotherhood is probably most apparent. But always, in sunshine and in shadow, my life among you has been blessed beyond measure by this glorious comradeship with men so ready both to counsel and to cheer. So it is a novel situation which confronts me today. How am I to speak in set terms to you again in the formal outlines of a theological statement? Might I not with more propriety rest my case upon the record of these five years at Flushing?

But, perhaps, in view of the commemorative character of this Council, coinciding as it does with the anniversary of the Council which installed Dr. Lyman, and falling upon the 60th anniversary of the founding of this Church, the occasion rather than the person involved may warrant a statement of the type of teaching which may be expected if I am installed by you in this old historic South Church.

As a member of the Congregational Church from boyhood, tracing my lineage through at least 250 years of Congregational ancestry, and as a graduate of Oberlin College and Oberlin Theological Seminary, I have a denominational background of inheritance and experience which makes very dear to me the freedom of our churches. In this liberty of the faith, I have reshaped my interpretation of religion without that sense of shock which often accompanies a change of views in these days of theological reconstruction. How inevitable these changes are is apparent when we remember that the older theology took shape in the minds of men who thought of the universe and the history of man on the earth from a point of view in which we cannot share. The old philosophy cannot interpret the new science. But though our wider knowledge has thus brought us



into a new thought-world, utterly foreign to that of our fathers, I am glad that I can see that the essential elements in the religion of our fathers survive, though they may be interpreted by another philosophy. Modern Christianity is essentially the Christianity of the historic Church in that it affirms that God's Spirit has entered into history, the Eternal and Infinite comes into a personal relationship with us. We find God in Christ in that same experience of His presence which has characterized all the history of the Christian Church. In my own case, when as a youth I went to college, not at all with the thought of seeking culture for its own sake but to be fitted for the Gospel ministry, I went with the naive and undiscriminating theology of boyhood, largely mediaeval both in form and content. And I owe to the religious liberty and open-mindedness of Oberlin, and most of all to a member of this Council who was my teacher there, the newer point of view which came to me gradually without, so far as I can recall, any sense of alarm or loss of faith. This growth was of course helped after leaving Oberlin by the immensely practical experiences in my work for three years at Berea College, Ky., and during my pastorate of three years in Bellevue, O., and of five years in Flushing. Nor do I count myself yet to have apprehended but I press on.

And now I come to South Church where for thirty-seven years our honored Prince in Israel, Dr. Lyman, has built the "gold, silver and costly stones" upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, bringing to so ripe a fruition the sixty years of church history which we celebrate today. Until I came here last November, I had known him chiefly in those activities beyond this parish in which the Church Universal shares. It has been my rare privilege, during these past months while he was on the other side of the world, to discover how this Church reflects his interpretation of the love of God. The comradeship of Jesus is deeply understood here today because of the way in which that comradeship has been incarnate in his personality. The friendliness of this church and the welcome it extends to all sorts and conditions of men, an endowment beyond value in money, are the fruit of his labors. And the Church rejoices that the coming of a new pastor upon whom is laid the sole responsibility for leadership and administration does not mean that Dr. Lyman is lost from the pastorate. As his time and strength may permit, his voice will often be heard from this pulpit and his fellowship here remains unbroken. But his freedom from parish responsibility here liberates him for those larger tasks of leadership in the

wider field where his powers have already been so generously and beneficially exerted. Thus do the limits of our parish disappear; and, in all this great city, with its urgent problems needing wisdom for their solution; in the colleges and seminaries, where his prophetic vision is so eagerly welcomed by the choicest youth of America; and in all the wide world of the surging life of today, wherever spiritual unrest seeks an interpreter of God, South Church may feel that her honored pastor, Dr. Lyman, is realizing to the full the opportunities of the "Christian Pastor in the New Age."

The unqualified esteem, admiration and love lavished upon him wins my heart. This Church would not deserve another pastor if it could lightly contemplate the severing of those tendrils of affection which for almost forty years have been winding about his heart, uniting him in these tender relations with this Church which is as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Do not imagine that in coming here I expect to take his place in the love and devotion of this Church. I hope to come to my own place. It is not a problem in subtraction or division but rather one of addition and multiplication. And I am sure that the Church and the new pastor will ever cherish this rich endowment of love which belongs to the Church as the accrued wealth of a life time of communion in Christ under the leadership of our beloved Doctor Lyman.

To such a Church I come with my message and my ministry. I find all that I wish to say grouping itself about my thought of Christ. I will therefore endeavor to define in the terms of Christ my theories about God, Man, and the Social Order.

### I. MY BELIEF IN GOD.

The life of Jesus not only interprets for me the other revelations of God in nature and in history, it brings an immediate conviction of certainty about the existence of God and convinces me that the relation of God to man is best described by the word Father. And as I come to this belief in a God who is all loving through His revelation in the life of Jesus, whom I believe to be the normal sinless man in perfect relations with God. I express this unique relation of Jesus to the Father by calling him "The Son of God." I also apply the title Christ to Jesus meaning by this His Lordship among men. That is, I believe the purpose of the life of Jesus to be identical with the purpose of the life of God so far as that life may be shared by men. Or, to put it in another way, I believe that in the

character of Jesus I see the character of God, that his personal life is the personal life of God, so far as that life can be shown to or known by men, that He is thus for all time and for all eternity the Word of God, declaring the purpose which is the very substance of God. To know Jesus is to know God. He is the way to the Father.

I come to this conviction about Christ, which thus makes Him the object of my faith and worship and not simply the great example to be imitated, not merely through His teachings and life in Palestine but chiefly through the effects of His continuing life among men. As men have worshipped him through the Christian ages there has come from His Spirit an outpouring of the divine life which has been the dynamic of the Christian religion. And He is today, for every man who believeth, the power of God unto salvation. If we take these high words upon our lips in no cant sense, we realize that it is in this way that the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance the things of Christ so that we, His brethren, in our measure, are filled with the fulness of God which dwelt in Christ without measure. As a Christian believer in God, I hope for an eternal fellowship with the Spirit of Christ in a never-ending discovery of God, in which the Eternal Son, our Elder Brother, will ever be the Way to Him, whom to know is life eternal.

Because of this belief that the personal discovery of God in Christ is the essence of Christianity, I am not alarmed by the change which has come in our theories about inspiration. The Bible has abiding significance, not because it was dictated by God and is infallible and inerrant, but because it records the history of God's revelation of Himself through the Hebrew prophets and in that Hebrew history which culminates in Christ. No other literature can ever mean so much to men. Modern scholarship is rendering an inestimable service as it reveals to us the circumstances under which these books were written which contain this record of God's self-revelation. The prophets are standing forth as men into whose inner lives we can enter; and the light that is being shed on the life and times of Jesus enables us to know the historic Christ as He has not been known since the days of the Apostles. A Christian faith does not fear but seeks to find the facts which may give a better historical knowledge of the inner life of men through whom God has revealed himself.

Believing thus in God as a personal Spirit of Love, I come to the questions about His works in creation as related especially to miracles and the problem of evil.



As a person is always more than he does and cannot be contained or wholly revealed in any or all of his works, so God always transcends His creation. But as a person always is where he acts, therefore God is eternally in an immediate relation to the universe. That is, God is both transcendent and immanent, and neither fact should be forgotten when we discuss the possibility of miracles and the problem of evil.

Our difficulties about miracles usually rest upon the assumption that there is a sphere of law, external to God, conditioning His activities. But there can be no law which precedes and conditions all reality. We can only say of a law that it describe an already existing reality. It is our formulation of observed facts. When we speak of the universality of law and the immutability of God we are speaking of two aspects of the same thought, namely, that God has an eternal consistency of purpose in His relations to the universe. Therefore laws, which are only our description of the manifestation of the consistent purpose of God, can never completely describe His activities. A miracle then is never to be defined as a violation of law any more than a living plant is a violation of the law of gravitation. The way in which we observe God working, which we formulate as law, is the way which He has chosen because of His immutable loving purpose. If, in harmony with this same consistent purpose, He chooses another way, no law is broken. For, in the first place, we cannot as yet formulate all the laws which might describe the observed facts concerning God's relations with His creatures; and, in the second place, because God is an infinite Person and so comes into immediate relations with His children, the modes are infinite by which He may manifest His consistent loving purpose. In any event the question of miracle is a question of fact; and the supreme fact of the universe is Jesus who is the great miracle.

The problem of evil arises when we think of God's immanence and face the facts of guilt and sorrow in human experience. If God exercises direct control in all His universe, why are sin and evil in the world? Faith in Christ saves us from pessimism. The revelation of God in Christ assures us of the love of God and this revelation accords with the fundamental assumption which we as moral and rational beings must make, namely, that we live in a world of rational thought and action; that is, that there is a moral as well as an intellectual basis in reality, and that God is all good as well as all powerful. The denial of this assumption would make any effort irrational and would amount to intellectual and moral suicide. Christ's revelation of God as Father thus accords with our deep-

est needs. This certainty of God's love is gained from Christ not merely in spite of sin and sorrow but in the light of Calvary. God's loving purpose is expressed in a world in which He has created free spirits. This freedom is real and involves the possibility of wrong choices, and this possibility has resulted in sin and evil which thus occur, not as the direct purpose of God but because consequent upon His purpose to develop character in free spirits in a real world where evil results from sin. And Paul in the face of all the horrors of his own age sums up for every age the positive answer of a Christian faith to the problem of evil when he says that "we know that to them who love God all things work together for good."

The problem of evil cannot be separated from the problem of sin, and this will be considered in my discussion of man in his relations to God.

## II. MY BELIEF ABOUT MAN.

My belief about man is defined by my belief in Christ as the first born of many brethren. So while I see the fact of sin I see also man redeemed from sin.

*A. Man as a Sinner:* In the world as we see it, we find man at the head of the scale of creatures, the goal of creation, possessing in conscience the power to perceive obligation and conscious of failure and sin. This perception of obligation and consciousness of failure imply the freedom of the will. We ought because we can. We can because we ought. But though man has moral freedom as an individual, the sphere for the exercise of his freedom is given in that he is a member of society. This society is abnormal because by universal failure to meet obligation the race is not in harmonious relations with God and the universe. Sin and its consequences are in society as a universal fact. By the facts of this inheritance and environment every person is in a measure conditioned; but the effect of these facts is not that the child is born a sinner; nor that he is blameworthy because of parental sin; nor that his free will was lost in the sin of primitive man. The child is born possessing the weak temptable nature of our common humanity, makes wilful choices, and sins by the exercise of free will. This is the history of the race. Whatever predisposition to sin may be due to inheritance and environment, we must maintain the possibility of character even to commit such sin by affirming a real freedom to sin or not to sin.

The attitude of God to sinful man is revealed by Jesus. The sinner is a lost son in a far country. God's purpose is defeated but He is still the Father. The sinner has lost the approving fellowship of the Father. This lost condition carries with it in many cases the sense of guilt and moral failure and always involves moral deterioration and many other evil consequences. These evil consequences are not limited to the life that now is, for Jesus plainly teaches the eternal significance of our moral choices. But He reveals God as a loving Father ever seeking to reclaim His lost sons. When they return to the Father's house He gladly receives and forgives them. The supreme means and cause of this reconciliation is the atoning life of Christ.

*B. Redemption:* The forgiveness of sins and renewed communion with God through faith in Christ is a fact of experience, attested by every Christian, and witnessed to by the New Testament in such expressions as that of Paul (II. Cor. 5:12) that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The New Testament has no definite philosophical theory of the Atonement. The fact is the important thing rather than its explanation. Men have been thus reconciled to God whose theories about it have widely differed and the acceptance of a correct theory would not necessarily imply a personal experience of the fact.

None of the historic theories of the Atonement seem to me to be adequate to explain this relationship between God and man effected in Christ which delivers men from sin. Christ's death did not, as it seems to me, satisfy the claims of a devil who divides the rule of the universe with God the Father, nor did He render a satisfaction for the sake of God's honor, or pay a debt due to the holiness and law of God, or serve as a penal example that the government of God might not be discredited, though all these explanations have been accepted in different ages by the Church. Nor is it enough to say that the moral character of Christ as an example of obedience influences men to choose the right. This is true and needs emphasis. But more than this is true. We are brought by Christ's death, interpreted by His life, to a place where we experience God's attitude toward us and our sin. It is only a turning from sin to God which Christ thus effects which can fulfil the purpose of God.

We can understand this partially in our own personal experience. If a friend has sinned and broken the bonds of fellowship I cannot take up the friendship with him again until there has been some sense of sorrow

experienced by the transgressor. This is not that my wounded sense of honor may be satisfied nor that my other friends may be saved from a sense of injustice because of my overlooking the sin. For I have not ceased to love him. But to make possible any real renewal of the friendship he must in some sense suffer for his sin and understand my suffering because of his sin. I once tried to renew a friendship with one who had injured me when this real repentance was not experienced. But the broken cords of our fellowship never healed. If I could have done him some great service, have helped him at the cost of suffering in spite of and because of his sin, if the strands of our broken friendship had been melted together in the fire of some sacrifice on my part which revealed my real love for him and sorrow not because of my hurt but because of his sin, there might then have been deeper fellowship than any that had preceded.

Now in a real sense we find in the sufferings and death of Christ the suffering heart of God. And it is only as we thus suffer with God, in our fellowship with Christ's sufferings, that we enter into real communion with God. God's purpose to reconcile sinners to himself is realized in that moment of surrender when the sinner begins to see sin as God sees it and in penitence and repentance begins to experience the meaning of forgiveness in the new life which is hid with Christ in God.

*C. All atonement complete in Christ:* Among men without knowledge of the historic Christ, God has been able to make other revelations of Himself which have influenced men to commit themselves to Him in faith. But all reconciliation in ages past or future is effected by God because of His eternal purpose completely revealed in Christ, and a man's communion with God is enlarged to its full possibilities only as he discovers in some sphere of life such a full revelation of God as Christ gives. For this is the meaning of the reconciliation with God in Christ, that He has made such a revelation of Himself that "we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (II. Cor. 3:18).

### III. MY BELIEFS ABOUT THE SOCIAL ORDER.

I have thus far spoken of our relation to God as individuals, but Christ taught His disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom; hence I believe in the coming of the Kingdom of love in which right relations to God the Father produce right relations among all His children. The



social gospel and the gospel of individualism are interdependent. It is not enough to say that the destitute slum-dweller needs a new tenement without dark rooms. A palace is not without moral problems. Nor is it enough to say that the sinner in the slums needs only a new life. He needs a new life in a new tenement. Hence the full gospel of Jesus is that we who are God's children may have communion with Him and are called to establish the brotherhood.

The Church has often concerned itself so exclusively with the psychology of conversion that it has neglected the sociology of a Christian brotherhood. But there are signs of progress. Many conditions which partly account for this past neglect no longer operate. In a large part of Christendom today the disciples of Jesus can change social conditions by legislation where formerly no such relief was possible. Our social consciousness today is indefinitely enlarged because of the modern facilities for transportation and communication which have made the world one neighborhood so that we share in the problems of all nations. And the industrial revolution, due to modern science and machinery, is a third fact which increases our interdependence beyond the wildest dreams of any other age in the history of man. To neglect the social teachings of Jesus in this crisis would be fatal to the Church. His words and His life are to be the controlling factor in determining our attitude toward international relations, race questions, immigration, the labor problem in all its aspects, Socialism, the housing problem, the care of dependents, defectives and delinquents, the relation of the government to public utilities, the legal suppression of commercialized vice, and in all the varied questions which relate to our common life. It is largely because of this social aspect of the Gospel which proclaims the brotherhood as an attainable ideal that I have accepted the call of South Church in its significant location in this so-called "down-town" field. The future of the Christian church depends upon its success in meeting the new problems of the city in this new age. South Church stands on the frontier in its relations to these crucial problems. And while no single church can solve these problems, I believe this Church is fitted both by equipment and location to make a large contribution to their solution.

The great commission of our Lord, "Go ye into all the world," prophesies a universal brotherhood, hence I believe in missions in every land. For though as a Congregationalist I believe that each Church is properly independent in its own parish, I also believe that each Church is



a part of the Universal Christian Church and so I recognize the obligations of fellowship in the great common enterprises of the Kingdom.

The "Great Commission" also rings with a promise, "Lo, I am with you alway"; and therefore I believe that Christ now guides His Church in this onward development. We have many revelations of His presence—One Parousia, and many Apocalypses. As we teach His precepts of brotherhood, we are not alone. His Spirit is with us and the Kingdom cometh in the power of His presence.

But the brotherhood of the Children of God is not limited to this age or this earth. Christ brings us such an assurance of the reality of our communion with God that we view our departure from these temporal conditions without fear, for nothing can separate us from this eternal fellowship. We share in the glorified, triumphant life of our risen Lord who brings life and immortality to light.

This then is my message. All men can enter this redemptive association with Jesus Christ. The possibility of friendship with God is the Gospel, the glad news which I am commissioned to preach. The redemptive power of the friendship of Jesus is the greatest fact in the universe. To bring men face to face with Jesus Christ that they may know Him and the power of His risen glorified life is the deepest personal joy a man can know and the largest social service he can render.

To this faith I come through Jesus Christ, who at the close of His earthly ministry described His relations with His disciples by the name of friendship, saying, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends."





